Imonda language

Imonda is a [Papuan language](#) of [Sandaun Province](#), [Papua New Guinea](#). It has a simple consonant system and a complex vowel system, with no phonological tones. Imonda is heavily verb oriented, and does not mark nouns for number or gender, but marks number on the verb for subject, object, and several other types of noun phrases. Tense, aspect, negation and interrogation are also indicated in part on the verb. There is a very high-frequency topic clitic, which can be used on noun phrases, adverbs, or verbs. The language has no coordinating or subordinating conjunctions, filling these roles with other approaches.

Imonda	
Native to	Papua New Guinea
Region	Sandaun Province
Native speakers	(250 cited 1994)[1]

Language family	Border
	  ▪ Bewani Range
	    ▪ Bapi River
	      ▪ **Imonda**

Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`imn`
Glottolog	`imon1245 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/imon1245)`[2]

Contents

Phonology

Imonda has 10 vowels, which is the most number of vowels for any [Border](#) language, and also much more than most other Papuan languages.[3]

i		u
e		o
ɛ	ə	ɔ
æ	a	ɒ

History

Late in the 19th century, Imonda speakers had limited contact with Malay traders. These traders were referred to as **sue-na-id** *men of fire*. Though in some areas of New Guinea the locals became fluent in Malay at the time, there appears to have been no such influence on Imonda speakers.

The next interaction with outsiders occurred during World War II. Japanese soldiers fleeing Americans at the coast stayed at Imonda for a few days. There was a fight and two Imonda speakers were killed, some houses were burnt down, and villagers were raped.

Later there was some contact with the Dutch, who hired locals as carriers or for work in towns. At this time many Imonda speakers did learn Malay (notably not recognizing that they had had any previous contact with it) and were exposed to Western culture.

Until 1962, the language Imonda was spoken almost exclusively in a single village now called "Imonda on the rocks". At that date, the Australians assumed control from Dutch New Guinea, and the Imonda split into two groups and established two villages in more accessible locations: **Mol** (*daughter*) and **Põs** (*grass*).

Wordlists had been compiled for all Waris languages including Imonda prior to 1973. The grammar of the language was studied in detail by Walter Seiler in a Ph.D. dissertation (1984)[4] and subsequent book (1985).[5]

Unlike many neighboring areas, Malay was never systematically taught to Imonda speakers, though some loanwords from Malay are in use. At the time of Seiler's 1985 grammar of the language, when conversation with the neighboring Waris occurs, it is often carried out in Tok Pisin, in which all Imonda speakers are fluent, and from which Imonda takes many loanwords.

Numerals

Imonda's numerals are based on compounding. For example, 3 is denoted *sabla mugõ* (lit., two one) and 5, *sabla sabla mugõ* (two two one).[6]

Noun classifiers

Imonda classifies nouns using verbal prefixes which evolved from serial verbs.[7] These serial verbs typically had to do with handling and preparing objects, and the noun classifiers are only required before a small set of common nouns, with meanings like 'give', 'put', 'throw', 'hold', and 'carry'. There are around 100 different noun classes, but some nouns belong to multiple classes; for example, as they are prepared, coconuts have to be picked, husked, and split. If a coconut has been picked but not husked, it will take the classifier *põt*, which is identical to the verb for picking. Similar classifiers specify each state of preparation. Though they are historically derived from serial verb usage with meanings like 'pick that and hand it to me', they have entirely lost that meaning and Imonda speakers are not always aware of the similarity.

Some of Imonda's classifiers[7]

form	members	likely source	source verb meaning
l-	edible greens, books	*les*	pile up
pui-	biscuits, coconuts, items normally split	*puiual*	split (something) in two
u-	Small animals; fish, frogs	unknown	unknown
i-	water	*i*	scoop water out of dammed fish trap
bas-	netbags	unknown	unknown
lëg-	clothing, flat things	*lëg*	give birth
nëh-	things that can be tied	*nëhe*	tie up
tit-	betelnuts	*tit*	pick betelnuts

There are two classifiers, *fa-* and *g-*, that can occur with a large set of nouns not following any apparent pattern, and even replace other classifiers in situations they normally are used. Loanwords also fall into these classes. There is some evidence that *fa-*, the most common classifier in the language, did not derive

from a verb at all, but instead was reanalyzed from an initial *f* on several common verb stems (the same verbs that require classifiers).[7]

Verbs that always require classifiers[7]	
ai	'give'
eha	'put'
pi	'get'
(f)ia	'get'
keda	'hang up'
hõdõ	'put up'
nugahõ	'fill in'
shi	'stick into'
api	'throw'
ula	'hold, possess'
uluh	'hold'
ue	'put into fire'

Transitive verbs agree with their objects in number using the suffix *-uɒl*:[3]

> *ehe-m iɛf nibia-**uɒl** fe-na-f*
> 3-DAT house build-PL.OBJ do-BEN-PRS
> '(I) build a house for him.'

Motion verbs such as *uagl* "go" can take classifiers, and change meaning to something like "carry" when they do so. Unlike with other verbs, *-i-* separates the classifier from the motion verb. Because of this, use of an actual serial verb construction can be distinguished from use of a classifier (the *-i-* will be missing).

Several verbs can use classifiers or not, with no change in meaning: *ne* "eat", *pada* "hold", and *li* "lie".

Imonda also classifies nouns into three large sets using several copula-like verbs which can only be used with certain nouns. Roughly speaking the classes correspond to tall or vertical things, flat or horizontal things, and a third class which is neither. These copulae evolved out of the verbs *lõh* "stand", *ale* "sit" and *li* "lie". There is also a copula *ialuõ*, which can be used with any noun.[8]

Number

Imonda has a dual number as well as a plural.

In contrast to most other languages, the Imonda language features a non-plural marker:

	singular	plural
Imona	*toad-ianèi*	*toad*
English	*boy*	*boy-s*

Verbs can potentially agree in number with their subject, object, recipient, benefactive, possessor, and/or accompanier, and there are different strategies for each. For example, dual in either subject or object is usually marked by ''-ual'' on the verb; a human subject may instead be marked by ''e-'' on the verb, or both may coöccur. Plural subjects are usually marked by raising the last vowel of the verb stem, but some verbs have suffixes that are used, or completely change form in the plural. A single verb '**ai**' '*give*', marks for singular recipient obligatorily with the suffix ''-h''. The suffix ''-na'' obligatorily marks singular beneficiaries, while the same suffix optionally marks a singular human possessor.

In Imonda, transitive verbs agree with subjects in number by vowel raising or suppletion.[3]

gloss	singular	plural
'do'	fe	fi
'eat'	ne	hla
'go'	uagl	aiuagl
'go up'	puhɒ	aipuhɒ
'pound sago'	sne-ula	sne-ula-fia
'search'	soh	suh
'see'	nagla	naglɛ
'speak'	ɒ	ɔ
'stand'	lɒh	ləfah
'tear'	se	si
'weave netbag'	hɒnɒ	pueg

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